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ABSTRACT

This paper, a response to questions raised on state and local levels on reading in kindergarten, deals with insights required to teach early reading rather than daily reading activities for children. Sections briefly discussed are: A view of reading as a communication process; the importance of teacher sensitivity to individual differences in children's development; curriculum considerations (the importance of story reading, oral language use, speaking and writing experiences, understanding the organization of print, and a good assessment program); organization considerations such as planning, grouping, and activity areas; and the importance of encouraging parent involvement. Also included are a list of available bulletins and brochures for parents on reading, and a joint statement by seven professional associations of concerns about present practices in pre-first grade reading instruction, with recommendations for improvements. The viewpoint taken is that reading is broader than any one method, commercial program or narrow skills approach, and that reading instruction goes beyond workbooks and ditto worksheets which do not adequately provide for creative and individual achievement. (Author/SS)

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KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM ISSUES

READING

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2

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page No.
	Acknowledgements	ii
	Rationale	iv
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Reading Defined: A View of Reading	3
3.	A Look at the Child	5
4.	Kindergarten Reading Curriculum	9
5.	How to Organize for Reading Instruction	29
6.	Parent Involvement	35
7.	Information for Parents on Reading	39
8.	Reading and Pre-First Grade	41
	Bibliography	43

RATIONALE

Children growing up in a literate society begin to encounter written language before they personally experience the need to communicate beyond face-to-face situations. All of them become aware of and able to use written language to some extent.

They become aware of books, signs, captions, printed containers, logos, handwriting in the day-to-day experiences they have. They recognize stop signs, read cereal boxes, scribble letters, write their names, follow familiar stories and join in the reading.

For some children, their awareness of written language and its uses leads so naturally to participation that they are reading and writing, even inventing their own spelling rules, before they or their parents are even aware that they are becoming literate. The process of acquisition of written language parallels for such children that of acquisition of oral language.

Our contention is that acquisition of literacy is an extension of natural language learning for <u>all</u> children.

We believe that children learn to read and write in the same way and for the same reason that they learn to speak and listen. <u>The way</u> is to encounter language in use as a vehicle of communicating meaning. <u>The reason</u> is need. Language learning whether oral or written is motivated by the need to communicate, to understand and be understood.

From "Learning to Read is Natural," by Kenneth S. and Yetta M. Goodman, University of Arizona, paper presented at Conference on Theory and Practice of Beginning Reading Instruction, Pittsburgh, April 13, 1976--to be published in <u>Beginning Reading</u>, Lauren Resnick and Phyllis Weaver, Editors, Erlbaum Inc.

INTRODUCTION

What reading is and how it relates to young children is a highly debatable question. In his book, This is Reading, Frank Jennings (1965) said, "Reading begins with wonder at the world about us." Reading is not restricted to the printed page and never was. Throughout all history, man has read meaning into many things such as the flight of birds or sunspots. Reading begins as the young child explores his/her world. Reading begins to encompass that world when the parent, or other adult, stands with the child at the window and 'reads' the beauty of the day.

James Hymes (1964) said, "Learning to read is a continuous process." All children start this process long before they come to kindergarten. When children enter kindergarten they have had five years of living and learning and informal reading. Formal reading curriculum begins on the first day a child enters school and continues throughout the year.

This Kindergarten Curriculum Issues paper was written in response to questions raised on state and local levels. Research conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (Bates, 1976) revealed a need for the Department to give direction regarding reading in kindergarten. At the same time, kindergarten teachers have expressed concern over pressures to teach young children to read. The teacher is not only called upon to give evidence that reading is a part of the kindergarten

curriculum, but to ensure that these young children attain high levels of achievement.

This paper deals with insights required to teach early reading rather than daily reading activities for children. The word 'reading' refers to a concept which is broader than any one method, commercial program or a narrow skills approach. Likewise, the concept of 'reading instruction' goes beyond workbooks and ditto worksheets which do not adequately provide for creative and individual achievement.

READING DEFINED: A VIEW OF READING

Reading is a communication process. The successful development of this process in beginning reading is dependent upon the interweaving of the physical, social, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive development of the child. For a child to learn to read, it is important that he/she have varied experiences, language competence, visual and auditory discrimination skills, problem solving abilities, an interest in words, and a positive attitude toward books and reading.

Goodman (1970) summarized this comprehensive view by pointing out that proficient reading is the interaction of the thought and language of the author with the thought and language of the reader, as the reader tries to reconstruct the author's meaning.

Since learning to read is viewed as a continuous process, it is not necessary to use the term 'reading readiness.' It is, however, necessary that opportunities for reading experiences be provided to accommodate the wide range of individual differences among children, to enable each child to develop at his/her own pace, and to learn to read with comprehension, understanding, confidence and delight.

A LOOK AT THE CHILD

> Mrs. Ames is reading a story to her kindergarten class. To a casual observer this looks like a simple activity. She is holding the book in a way that allows the children to see the pictures, and she is using an animated voice in her reading. The entire class is sitting quietly and the children appear to be intent on listening to the story.

This scenario describes a natural classroom activity. Much of what is happening is actually taking place behind the scene. Mrs. Ames is assessing her students and individualizing instruction through the use of a book. After she has read the story, she will observe the children's initial responses. Some will repeat parts of the story, some will recall a part that impressed them, and a few will be able to see a relationship between the story and other stories, or between the story and an event in their own lives.

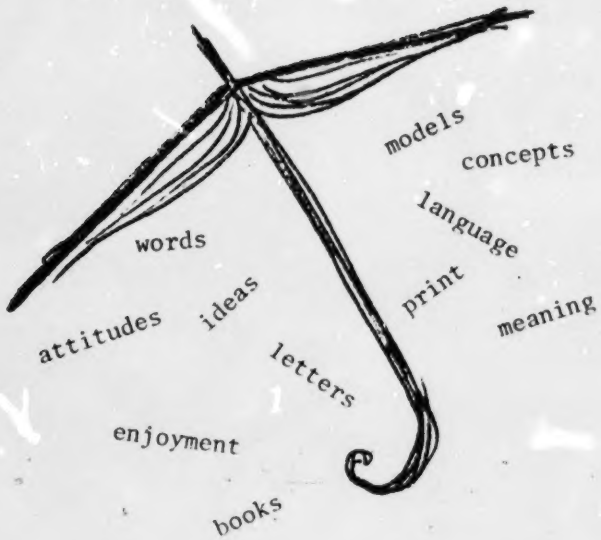
Mrs. Ames knows that the further a child moves from a literal understanding to an ability to see relationships, the deeper the child's understanding. Teacher assessment of children will continue over a long period of time. Some students will never discuss the book again, and others will refer to parts of the story months later. A kindergarten teacher's accepting attitude enables each child to unfold according to the pattern of that particular individual and according to the demands of learning to read.

Child development is a process of change, with many changes taking place in a child through time. The ideal is to look for ways to teach reading that might be a 'match' for that particular child's skills, interests and level of development. The specific 'match' of teaching strategy to stage of development for one child might not be appropriate for another child. Throughout the kindergarten day, young children are giving clues regarding their stages of development and areas of interest. Todd and Heffernan (1970) have pointed out that the important fact about a child is not his/her age, the stage the child is in, or individual developmental problems, but the fact that each child is a unique personality. The kindergarten teacher must continue to challenge each student's development. Learning experiences are most productive when the teacher takes cues from the child. A new activity is paced to a child's ability to understand.

Sensitive pacing of new experiences gives children the opportunity to be successful in their learning. Having achievements recognized by adults is very important to the child. A feeling of success is a validation of one's self to a young child. Acknowledgement from the kindergarten teacher helps a child in his/her growing understanding that achievement is a result of effort.

Child development is not a matter of nature or nurture, but a matter of reciprocal responsiveness between the child and the environment--both must take active roles in the interactive process. Itty Chan (1978) observed that in teaching reading to young children, one needs to be both an <u>insider</u> taking the perspectives of the child, and an <u>outsider</u> being

a part of the child's environment and experience, while constantly relating to the child in new ways and growing with the child. The teacher is the facilitator who offers students a broad range of reading and language experiences which enable each child to be successful.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books

KINDERGARTEN READING CURRICULUM

Efforts to find a panacea--the one method, medium or approach--which would assure success in learning to read for every child have met with failure. It is therefore important for kindergarten teachers to recognize some broad concepts about reading and learning which will assist each child, insofar as possible, to experience success in his/her first encounters with print.

Excellent beginning reading can be taught by the kindergarten teacher without relying on any one single approach as the solution to the challenge of teaching reading. Children bring a variety of backgrounds, interests and abilities to the learning situation. A combination of approaches and activities will enable teachers to respond to these individual differences in children.

The kindergarten reading curriculum should be the beginning of the district's K-12 reading program. This curriculum will include books, oral language, speaking/writing/reading experiences, skills related to the organization of print, and assessment. There will be opportunities for incidental and planned reading experiences for children throughout the kindergarten day and year. The activities should be planned by the teacher, in cooperation with other district personnel, to provide continuity with pre-kindergarten and later school programs.

There has been a tendency to isolate reading instruction as if it were a set of totally separate skills to be developed apart from the rest of the child's school and life experiences. This paper focuses instead on the idea that print carries meaning and that reading is functional. Reading is viewed as a communication process integrated with the other communication processes--speaking, listening, and writing.

The reading process involves language, conceptual, visual and auditory skills. A specific list of skills can be developed by an individual teacher or school district, or a skill program can be purchased from a commercial publishing company. However, the teaching of these discrete skills and testing of them do not alone make up the whole reading curriculum.

Books are the Big Umbrella

The importance of books and reading to children cannot be overestimated: books are what it's all about. 'Story time' has been an expected, accepted part of the kindergarten day; however in recent years it has been eliminated in many classrooms to create time to 'teach reading.' Reading to children is a natural way to introduce them to reading. Moreover, there is research which indicates that children who have been read to orally, early and systematically, are children who have been successful in learning to read (Durkin, 1966).

The kindergarten curriculum should include many opportunities for children to enjoy experiences with books. To be most effective, reading to children needs to be more than a routine, casual kind of activity. It should be an integral part of the planned, daily instructional activities. Story reading can familiarize children with books and also can assist them to: (1) develop a positive attitude toward reading, (2) build new language models, (3) understand that print is predictable, (4) expand concepts of the world around them, and (5) become comfortable with books and book language.

Some ways of making story reading time a special time to teach children about reading are to:

(1) Read to individual children or to small groups so children can see the print in the book and begin to relate the spoken and printed words.

(2) Turn the pages carefully so they begin to match printed sentences and phrases with those they already know 'by heart.'

(3) Re-read children's requests for favorite stories to help them understand the story line.

(4) Point out in the book 'words' that say what is being read.

Using these techniques while reading to children enhances story time as direct teaching time, but need not and should not detract in any way from the story's enjoyment.

Fiction books should be read to children from beginning to end without stopping to ask questions or point out information. Special language, names, and ideas which may need elaboration should be discussed before the story is read aloud. Interruptions during a story break the flow and rhythm of a good story, and lead to distractions and lack of concentration. Non-fiction books, however, can be read to children in parts in order to develop and emphasize specific concepts.

Independent listening/reading experiences with familiar stories can be provided by using records or tapes of recorded books. Children can follow along in individual books containing the story, as the story is read on the record or tape.

Children need full and continuous access to the books that have been read to them. Such access can give individual children opportunity to practice matching their memorized story line with the printed story line. It can also be effective in assisting children to understand the relationship between sounds and letters and in creating their own sound and symbol rules as they practice such matching.

Oral Language

> Through experience and through language we learn. Experience needs language to give it form. Language needs experience to give it content.
>
> . . . Loban

In her book, Teaching Reading as a Language Experience, Mary Anne Hall (1976) states that, "The essence of the language experience approach is the use of the language and thinking of the learner as a foundation for reading instruction. Each learner's language and personal experiences are used to create reading materials which help to show the reader the relationship between written language and his already familiar oral language." The kindergarten teacher, as part of teaching beginning reading, should work with children in the development of the children's use of oral language.

Good language development occurs daily as adults interact with children, and as children interact with children. Teachers have many avenues to help children develop expressive language and receptive language understanding. Such ways include: daily socializing interactions, planning for the day's program, asking questions, and imitation activities. Children need to talk about their world and their relationship to it. They also need to learn about the difference between the intent of a message, its possible misinterpretation or connotation by another child or adult.

Listening

Listening is a vital part of helping children develop oral language use. Having a good listener helps children realize that what they have to say is important. For example:

> Tommy's mother picked him up from kindergarten. It was his initial experience at school and for her the important experience of 'letting go' of a child. Their first few minutes together were filled with conversation. Tommy told his mother all about his adventures in class. She listened carefully and responded. Then, they both were quiet. Tommy looked at his mother and became very serious. "All day," he said, "I had a feeling about you."

A short sentence a child said to his mother, but it told her many things. Tommy is able to put his feeling into words. He has the advantage of a mother who listens to him. Children need someone who will listen, respond, and listen again. Only a 'live' listener provides this necessary interaction. Television gives information and entertainment, but does not talk back. The feedback in the interaction with another person allows children to test assumptions and to find out who they are.

Language Experiences

Much effective communication takes place child to child. In order for this kind of communication to occur, children must be allowed time and provided a place for talking. To encourage verbal interaction among children, periods of unstructured time must be planned when children are close to each other and are allowed to talk. Children also talk about things happening in their environment. A curriculum filled with things that interest young children gives them 'something to talk about.'

The kindergarten teacher also entwines the child's experiences with the spoken word and the written word by planning a rich environment of story telling and dramatic play. Reading books to children helps them discover that reading all by one's self may be wonderful and exciting. The enjoyment of reading begins when the two-year-old looks at, points, and laughs at words and pictures in a book. The progression from looking at to reading books is a developmental process that kindergarten teachers understand and cherish.

The child learns to value the printed word through his/her own expressive use of language when the teacher demonstrates that speech can be represented graphically by printing a word or sentence. This procedure is the heart of the language experience approach to reading. One easy, personal extension of the child's speech takes place in labeling the child's work, displaying the labeled work, and reading the captions to other children and parents. Signs that clarify block building can be written and taped to the blocks. Directions for a science experiment can be recorded. A child's favorite foods or activities can be described, recorded, and displayed. Recording throughout the school year helps children remember their accomplishments. A recorded story says to the child that what the child thinks and says is important enough to record and what is written can be read again and again.

Expressive Use of Language

There are two important points that must be emphasized in regard to the development of oral language use in relation to beginning reading: (1) the development of expressive use of language, and (2) the development of the use of language patterns. Expressive use of language primarily focuses on spontaneous talking. Spontaneous talking has been defined as "utterances made by the child on his own volition, as opposed to utterances purposfully elicited . . . " (Hubbell, 1977). When assessing a child's spontaneous language use, the teacher will focus first on the context in which the child is talking, and second, on things in the setting which constrain the child's spontaneous talking.

By noting the context in which a child shows rich vocabulary use and complex structure, the teacher is provided clues as to reading content which will be of interest to the child. This will also point to situations which may have to be changed in order to encourage the child to express ideas, questions, problems, and emotions. More fundamentally, if a child is not spontaneously talking, it is difficult for the teacher to assess the level of language development.

Helping the Child. Noting the context in which the child does not talk may indicate a number of constraining factors in the classroom. Some constraining factors which lessen the amount of spontaneous talking and the acquisition of vocabulary are:

(1) interference from other children

(2) physical limitations of play space

(3) commands

(4) instructions and questions from the teacher (Hubbell, 1977).

The teacher should also be aware that for some children, physically touching the child in a friendly manner does not necessarily increase the rate of talking, but may instead decrease spontaneity.

What can the kindergarten teacher do to help a child who is not spontaneously talking and thus naturally increasing vocabulary use and complexity of structure? The following suggestions are adapted from Hubbell (1977):

(1) High imitative prompting in which the teacher labels something and indicates to the child to say that word

(2) Conversation or just talking with the child by following the child's lead and waiting for the child to respond in the verbal interaction

(3) Commenting on the child's activities

(4) Reflecting on and expanding the child's utterances

(5) Joining the child in play but not directing the child's play

(6) Modeling language use by supplying words for the child but not specifically indicating the child should say the word

In these suggestions, verbal interaction is the focus and not formal programing to induce talking in all children or increase the rate of talking. It is very important to provide a rich language environment in which there is (1) a positive attitude toward conversation rather than insistence that the classroom be absolutely quiet at all times, (2) child-child conversation, and (3) child-adult conversation.

Use of Language Patterns

The second part of oral language development, the use of language patterns, is important in beginning reading because the typical four or five-year-old may have mastered basic patterns of the oral language, but may not be familiar with the patterns of printed language if they have not been read to at home. When listening to the different patterns of children's spontaneous talking, the teacher will hear fragments of sentence construction plus self-interruption and pauses. This will be accompanied by pointing, looking, and other non-verbal behaviors which give meaning to the utterances. These non-verbal context clues are not present when the child reads print. Reading to a child often and in an interesting fashion allows the child to note the patterns of language in print and to attend to the language for context rather than non-verbal clues.

Another aspect of language important for children is the understanding of word relationships. Some examples are:

around	top	under	then
back	big	in	unless
front	little	on	before
bottom	beside	if	after

These words are taught most effectively when they are used while children are involved in their own activities. Handing a child a block from the top of a pile and saying to the child, "I'm giving you a block from the top of this pile," helps give the child a meaningful referant for the word 'top.' Discovery that the child is not using the above words requires appropriate instruction so that the words become meaningful to

the child. These words do not refer to an object, but do express important relationships. These relationships will be important in reading comprehension.

Although oral language ability of a child is not the only indicator of potential reading achievement, the observation of children who read early and who enjoy reading suggests that oral language ability is important and that continuous development of oral language ought to be provided in the kindergarten reading curriculum.

Speaking/Writing/Reading Experiences

A reading program for young children must take into account at least three basic concepts about reading and learning. First, to learn to read, children must learn to deal with the complexities of print; second, children must recognize that reading has personal value for them; and third, the majority of children require careful, well-organized instruction. The curriculum presented in this bulletin is designed to meet these broad objectives and deal more fully with the problem of early reading than either an extremely structured skills approach or a completely incidental approach to instruction. It is designed to assist children to gain the necessary and vital information about the written code, and at the same time, facilitate the development, maintenance and expansion of interest in reading.

Beginning readers need to acquire two basic concepts about print:

(1) Print carries a message; to read means to discover that message.

(2) Print is made up of letters and words, and is organized.

Reading is a communication process which involves an exchange of meanings from author to reader. Learning to read then will occur most naturally when children are using reading to get a message, a story, or needed information.

Reading must be kept in constant relationship to writing. Wherever possible, composition in written language should be related to reading activities. Children's speech and dictated writing provide the best vehicles for the introduction of the concept that print carries a message. The advantages of recording children's words are first, that the child is producing a message from his/her own experience, and second, to demonstrate the concept of authorship by writing and reading to communicate a message. The act of recording children's language helps them realize that the teacher places value on what they say.

The teacher's role is to (1) make children aware of the relationship between spoken and written language, (2) point out to children that information can be found in print around the classroom, in the hallways, on street signs, and (3) provide children with new experiences within the classroom which bring them in contact with relevant print.

The language experience approach includes many writing/reading activities. Examples of student-created reading materials are: (1) child-dictated stories; (2) scrapbooks and collections of drawings with captions; (3) classbooks documenting and captioning class pictures from a field trip; (4) familiar stories rewritten in the child's language; or (5) labels or sentence captions on children's work, on nature displays, and other appropriate places in the classroom. Children should have access to a writing corner and to paper, pencils, and have time to scribble, draw, trace, copy and to write words independently. In addition to expressing ideas, discrimination and an awareness of the sequence of letters and letter clusters in English are sharpened by the act of writing.

Organization of Print

Another objective of the kindergarten reading curriculum is to help young children understand that print is organized by means of letters, words, and sentences, and that it is patterned left-to-right. For success in beginning reading, children need to:

(1) Discriminate shape and orientation of letters

(2) Observe left-to-right directionality

(3) Recognize that letters and letter sequences represent sounds

(4) Recognize words as units of meaning

(5) Recognize groups of words as carrying meaning.

Children must learn to discriminate the letters of the alphabet, each letter from every other letter, and upper case from lower case. Discrimination occurs internally and differently for each child. Opportunities for children to learn to discriminate the letters of the alphabet can be provided through a variety of familiar kindergarten activities which emphasize letter matching, printing and collecting variant forms of the same letters.

High interest words, those which have real and intense meaning for children, are often easily 'read' by young children. These words can become part of a word collection for each child. On the other hand, highly functional words, such as the, he, to, was, all, are, said, etc., are usually more easily learned as part of the story writing process. The emphasis should be on providing help for children to use and to understand unknown function words in connected context, either spoken or written (e.g., the toy, on the chair, rather than the, toy, on, the, chair).

Sentence 'sense' can be developed through discussions which encourage children to think of sentences about pictures on the page of a book. Also, teacher-directed sentence activies can assist children to understand simple patterns in print. "A balloon goes up," "A red balloon goes up," "A blue balloon goes up," "A red balloon goes up fast," "A blue balloon goes up fast," are examples of simple sentence expansion in vocabulary and ideas.

Learning the left-to-right orientation in printed English is important to success in reading. While reading sentences to children, directionality can be consistently demonstrated by teachers as they move their hand fluidly along the printed line from left to right. Consistent awareness on the part of the teacher as he/she works on the flannel board, sequences pictures, and other arranging types of activities help children acquire left to right orientation.

Assessment and Beginning Reading

Screening, assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation are components of kindergarten programs which enable teachers to systematically determine children's strengths and needs in the area of reading. The knowledge of a child's capabilities leads to intelligent planning and use of teaching strategies which can help the child become successful in beginning reading.

In developing a good assessment program for kindergarten, it is necessary to have general, long-range goals in mind. For example, the development of:

(1) oral language facility

(2) word recognition processes

(3) comprehension processes

(4) good attitudes toward reading

The specific assessment and teaching-learning situations provided in the kindergarten will also be guided by knowledge of the children's overall

development, the expectations of parents, the K-12 reading curriculum of the school district, and the nature of the children being assessed. Having in mind some general, long-range goals will assure that the instructional and assessment strategies are consistent with the end-of-the-year expectations.

Competence and Performance

Teachers of young children have always been aware that there is sometimes a noticeable difference between what a child is expected to do and what a child does in a particular situation.

An example of competence and performance is shown in the following description of a student teacher's encounter with teaching beginning reading in the kindergarten.

> Carol was a student teacher placed in a kindergarten late in the spring term of her junior year at college. One of the children in Carol's kindergarten class, a quiet, well-developed five-year-old boy, was failing every activity in the reading readiness workbook which was used by all kindergarten teachers in that public school district. Pressed by the college supervisor to try an alternative instructional approach, Carol decided to try a directed language experience with the entire class. Carol decided that each child would make up a short riddle. Further, each child's riddle would be a chart. Eventually, all the charts would be put together to make a book.
>
> Carol did an outstanding job of motivating the children. The riddles were creative and the children remained interested as she printed each riddle on the board. Carol stayed up until 3:00 a.m. the next day perfectly printing all 25 charts. She taped them up on the walls of the classroom before the children arrived. Now, Carol had printed each child's name at the bottom of the chart on which their riddle appeared. Her objective for each child was to identify his/her own riddle by recognizing his/her

name. Perhaps some children would read the print, some recall the entire riddle without reading, and some might not respond at all.

Although there were no children labeled 'readers' in the class, Carol began by telling the children that today they were going to read the riddles they had made up the day before. She explained that she would help them read their riddle when they found the chart with their name on it. Carol asked the boy who had recently been evaluated as needing another year of kindergarten to be the first to find his name. He did just that. Then, he read every line of his riddle correctly. Astounded, Carol asked him if he could read any of the other charts. He did that, too. He read all 25 charts. His earlier evaluation had included his inability to differentiate initial sounds, to learn the names of letters, and lack of attenting during reading instruction. His performance in a true reading situation indicated a competence in reading not revealed by a test of isolated language elements.

The above story is true. It is a story which illustrates one issue in the assessment of the development of early reading ability. That issue is reflected in the following question. How can we be assured that when we assess performance of such fragmented and isolated skills as naming letters, pronunciation, articulation, identifying initial and final sounds, we have correctly measured the child's competence in the holistic task of reading?

It is general knowledge that ingenuity and creativity contribute to the teaching ability of the kindergarten teacher. It is not as well known, however, that it also takes ingenuity and creativity to accurately assess the competence of a young child during beginning reading instruction. In the remainder of this section, a

general framework for assessing beginning reading instruction will be offered. Within this general framework, each teacher is expected to put his/her mark of creativity and individuality in delineating a personalized, beginning reading assessment program.

Methods of Assessment

There are many ways of developing assessment programs. There is the standardized reading readiness test. It might be wise to form a study group of kindergarten and primary teachers and administrators to look at a number of published tests to try and determine which one or ones might provide information related to the school's particular reading curriculum. A standardized test does allow comparison of children in a classroom within a testing situation. However, it is best to remember that information derived from such tests is not individualized or personalized and may not be a good indicator of the child's desire to succeed at reading.

The development of informal reading inventories is a step closer to the child. When it is appropriate, printing or typing a number of words on a single sheet, including the child's name, products advertised on TV, stop and go, etc., together with some of the words from among the word lists at the pre-primer and primer levels, can be tried. Pointing to or circling and saying the known words provides word recognition information to the teacher. The information gained in this activity can be expanded by asking the child what other words come to mind when the

recognized word is said. This gives some measure of vocabulary and semantic or meaning range. This is a more personalized approach which will provide different information than the standardized test.

In addition to standardized tests and informal reading inventories, teacher observation and judgment of each child's natural reading habits are important components of assessment. Observation is considered informal when it occurs while reading a story and children are noticed who do not attend to any story, who touch and investigate the child sitting next to them, etc. A more formal observation occurs by taking a five-minute, recorded sample on some task related to reading and comparing all the children on this task, or by recording a timed sample of all the children's behavior every half-hour during the kindergarten session to get a sample of language-oriented and self-chosen activities of the children. Both the informal and formal observation provide important information needed to develop instructional strategies for a particular child and for the class as a whole. The difference is in the more systematic method of the formal observation.

The methods of assessment chosen will depend on what is to be assessed, based upon what is being taught. For instance, observation of avoidance of the reading instruction situation will be noted in excessive fidgeting and the habit of distracting other children. This will be an informal observation. It may indicate, for example, that the child shows avoidance during visual sequencing tasks, but not auditory sequencing tasks. A thoughtful teacher will relate the classroom instruction to student needs demonstrated during the evaluation process.

Assessment and Teaching Strategies

Assessment can be thought of as a continuous, longitudinal process. Assessment immediately following specific instruction is helpful, but of greater value is continuous assessment for retention, transfer and application of a skill to a new situation. In other words, teachers need to monitor the child's growth in the use of a specific ability in many situations. Assessment can take place during short group lessons of five to ten minutes as well as during periods of individual instruction. Group lessons, however, have some potential for inaccurate assessment, especially in choral responding, since children may be echoing responses of other children rather than producing their own responses.

Throughout this section, it has been assumed that the purpose of assessing the child's reading ability during kindergarten is to provide a basis for individualized, personalized instruction. Such instruction will consist of appropriate teaching strategies which include the teacher's plan in teaching, the way material is organized, and the ways students are directed in the course of teaching (Green, 1971). Teaching strategies and assessment are related because strategies should be determined by what children need to learn. As Green (1971) has pointed out, the kindergarten teacher motivates, facilitates, guides, encourages, plans and evaluates in terms of the intended student learning.

HOW TO ORGANIZE FOR READING INSTRUCTION

> Tania slowly turned the pages of a large picture book. It was her favorite story and she wanted to make it last. When she finally came to the end of the book, Tania walked to the art table, reached for a piece of paper and crayons and began to illustrate an event in the story. Next she dictated a story about the picture to her kindergarten teacher who recorded it on the drawing. Finally, Tania 'read' her own story.

Tania is fortunate. She is in a classroom where the teacher has facilitated each child's learning through effective organization. The kindergarten teacher in this classroom not only knows how to organize, but knows the purpose of good organization. The goal of careful organization is to enable each child to learn with a maximum of ease and a minimum of frustration, in other words, to enable each child to be successful.

In every classroom the teacher is the curriculum decision-maker, the one who organizes the children, materials, space, time, activities, and personnel in a way that promotes learning. Effective organization is never a lucky accident.

Time is a most precious resource. It is a limited and exhaustible commodity. Therefore, in planning for the best organization in teaching reading to young children, time must be given primary consideration.

Colorful materials, competent personnel, and adequate space are important, but they are effective only if children are given the amount of time they need to learn. This is the variable that may make the difference between success and failure in learning to read. Children vary in the amount of time they need in responding to questions and the other forms of instruction. A kindergarten teacher must be sensitive in deciding upon the time that must be provided for children's responses.

Reading instruction in the kindergarten also requires that the teacher individualize instruction; that is, provide instruction appropriate to each child's level of development and learning style. The instruction may be on a one-to-one basis, to a small group, or to a large group of children, all of whom can benefit from the instruction at that time.

Planning

The first component of effective organization is planning. Careful planning must be done by teachers, aides, parents and children. Involving children in the planning process enables them to develop experience and confidence in their decision-making abilities.

Record-keeping is a necessary part of planning. Anecdotal notes or checklists can be used to record children's progress and to determine future direction and activities for each child.

Grouping

A group may consist of two children, five or six children, or the entire class. Individualized instruction does not only mean one-to-one instruction. It does mean instruction which is appropriate for that particular child at that particular time. There are times when teachers will want to create the opportunity to work with children individually. Skill development and interest are two major bases for grouping. Pre-assessment of a child's skills helps a teacher determine the appropriate skill group. Interest groups are determined by the child.

Types of Groups

Skill Groups. In grouping for instruction in specific skills, children who need a particular skill are grouped together. The group is disbanded as soon as the skill has been developed. Children can be allowed to select many of their own activities throughout the day. Actually, instruction in the skill a child needs can be carried out in any area a child chooses. Some groups may last five minutes, others may last five days or longer. The skill group can be reinstated later for assessment of the retention and generalization of a skill.

Interest Groups. In developing interest groups, encouraging exploration of interest can be done by allowing children to group according to a perceived common interest. In this group, children can explore their interest to the fullest. The effectiveness of this group depends

upon the ingenuity of the teacher in helping the children explore their interest and to expand and move forward in their interest.

Social Groups. When children work together to accomplish a purpose, social groups are formed. One of the outcomes of this kind of group is the marvelous discovery of friendship.

Total Class Group. There are times when it is appropriate for the entire class to work together as a group. For example, a teacher may want to work with a whole group when showing a film and discussing the content. Large group experiences lead to different individual activities for each child as the child creates personal reading materials.

Special Project Groups. Special project groups are formed to complete specific tasks. This group is also temporary and is disbanded as soon as the task is completed.

Areas

A large room allows a teacher to set up a variety of activities in different areas of the room. Each area of the room can be arranged for particular activities. An area might includes games, manipulative materials, or books.

Areas of the room designated for certain objectives can be changed occasionally to maintain interest and to meet the child's developmental changes. The area might keep the same basic format but have the content change. For example, a writing center might contain a typewriter, paper and pencils. The story starters and stimulus pictures will change as children's needs and interests change.

Areas of the room can also be set up to include materials of varying levels of difficulty. One corner of the room might contain games for children who are at the picture level. Another corner of the room could contain games which require the players to be able to read very simple directions. Children will generally choose the area according to their ability and ask for help when they feel secure enough to move on to another area.

A developmental area could be created according to children's interests. This area would enable children at different levels of development to interact. A 'bowling lane' in the classroom might be a developmental area. Activities in the 'lane area' would include:

- role playing
- keeping score
- counting money
- taking turns
- planning to visit a bowling lane
- dictating stories about a bowling lane
- making appropriate word cards.

The groups in these areas would vary in size. They might be large when many children are using the bowling lane, or individual when one child is dictating a story about a bowling lane.

In some areas there will be minimal supervision required. As a matter of fact, children will learn most effectively in some areas if the teacher is an observer and occasional participant. Through observation the teacher also can determine what new materials might be introduced to the area to sustain interest.

Conclusion

Individualized instruction requires the teacher to concentrate on individual pupils and devote maximum time to planning and assessing each child's level of development. Groups, time, space, and personnel can be arranged so that children's individual needs are met within the kindergarten group. Effective planning and organizing for reading allows a teacher to focus on the children and the content of the curriculum. Effective planning and organization in the kindergarten help children become actively involved in the process of learning to read.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

"I didn't realize Neil could read a recipe!" Mrs. Washington commented to her son's kindergarten teacher at the end of a morning she had spent in the classroom. Mrs. Ames, the teacher, smiled. The visit had been successful. Mrs. Washington had watched the class follow a picture recipe and make no-bake cookies. Thoughtful conferences and carefully written notes could not have communicated to Mrs. Washington all the insights she had gained from one classroom visit. Conferences and notes regarding reading in the kindergarten would continue to be part of the communication between teacher and parent, but now they would be based on a shared experience.

"Show, don't tell" is an admonition given to writers. 'Showing' an experience to a reader enables him/her to internalize it; 'telling' the reader may keep the act outside the reader's experience. This same advice is appropriate for teachers of young children in working with parents. It is known that parents are the child's first teachers. Parents are vital in the life of a young child and it is the teacher's responsibility to involve parents in their child's school life.

'Showing' parents their child in a classroom involved in regular kindergarten activities enables the parents to deepen their awareness of the child's learning and the setting in which it occurs. Merely 'telling'

the parents in a conference situation about their child in the kindergarten classroom is not as effective as having parents observe their child in action.

As trust between parents and teacher grows through many opportunities for communication, the parents may become more open with their child's teacher and reveal concerns about and dreams for their child. As this on-going process takes place, parents and teacher will continue gaining insights regarding the child.

Many parents express a desire to be part of their child's school life. Reading is a particular area where they seek involvement. Since parents are as different as children, they will approach this task with varying degrees of confidence and ability. It is important for parents to understand their role in developing their child's attitudes about reading.

'Enjoying' a story together is the center of parental involvement in the young child's learning (loving) to read. A parent can read a story or look at the pictures in a book and tell a story to a child. Or the child can 'read' the story to the parent by reading or telling. The necessary ingredients are the parents, the child, and a book.

A few minutes spent each day without television or outside distractions, and in the company of a relaxed parent and a book, can do more to teach a child to enjoy reading then memorizing all the skill techniques ever developed.

A 'home-book' program gives parents an opportunity to become actively involved in their child's reading. The extent to which a 'home-book' program is developed depends upon the commitment of each school. In introducing the program, the parents need to be invited to school to learn what the program involves.

In the beginning of the year, the parent might help the child select a book from the classroom library and then share it with the child at home. Later in the year, the child might select his/her own book and carry it home. An important part of the program is the creation of time and space at home for the child and parent to share the book.

Parents will need to understand that different books have different purposes. Some books give a child information, some talk about feelings, and others offer that old-fashioned thrill--an exciting story. A child may want to hear only part of an informative book and then require time to absorb the information. A book with a good story may become a 'read it again' book.

If a 'home-book' program is used, parents may need opportunities throughout the year to share their responses, observations and feelings with their child's kindergarten teacher.

Along with a 'home-book' program, other approaches can be suggested to the parents for use at home. Dolores Durkin (1977) says that stimulating growth in both oral and written language abilities are various combinations of 1) interesting experiences; 2) opportunities to discuss and ask questions; 3) availability of one or more persons to respond to questions and requests related to reading, writing and spelling; 4) availability of materials for writing; 5) positive contacts with books and writing; and 6) displays of written words and numbers that are related to the children's interests (birthdays, television programs, games, directions for the care of pets, etc.).

Parents should be made aware that talking with and listening to children are a vital part of learning to read. Opportunities for the give and take of conversation are constantly available in home situations. These opportunities for language development must be recognized and acted upon by the parents to be effective.

Thus, parents can be involved in their child's reading in a variety of ways. There is one contribution parents can make to encourage their child to love reading that is uniquely theirs--they can read their child a bedtime story.

"You may have tangible wealth untold:
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold,
Richer than I you can never be . . .
I had a mother who read to me."

Strickland Gillian

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS ON READING

Bulletins

870 *What is reading readiness?* Norma Rogers

871 *How can I get my teenager to read?* Rosemary Winebrenner

872 *What books and records should I get for my preschooler?* Norma Rogers

873 *How does my child's vision affect his reading?* Donald W. Eberly

874 *How can I help my child learn to read English as a second language?* Marcia Baghban (also available in Spanish)

875 *How can I encourage my primary-grade child to read?* Molly Kayes Ransbury

876 *How can I help my child get ready to read?* Norma Rogers

877 *Why read aloud to children?* Julie M.T. Chan

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READING AND PRE-FIRST GRADE*

A Joint Statement of Concerns about Present Practices in Pre-First Grade Reading Instruction and Recommendations for Improvement

- American Association of Elementary/Kindergarten/Nursery Educators
- Association for Childhood Education International
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- International Reading Association
- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Council of Teachers of English

A PERSPECTIVE ON PRE-FIRST GRADERS AND THE TEACHING OF READING

Pre-first graders need ...

opportunities to express orally, graphically, and dramatically their feelings and responses to experiences.

opportunities to interpret the language of others whether it is written, spoken, or non-verbal.

Teachers of pre-first graders need ...

preparation which emphasizes developmentally appropriate language experiences for all pre-first graders, including those ready to read or already reading.

the combined efforts of professional organizations, colleges, and universities to help them successfully meet the concerns outlined in this document.

CONCERNS:

1. A growing number of children are enrolled in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes in which highly structured pre-reading and reading programs are being used.

2. Decisions related to schooling, including the teaching of reading, are increasingly being made on economic and political bases instead of on our knowledge of young children and of how they best learn.

3. In a time of diminishing financial resources, schools often try to make "a good showing" on measures of achievement that may or may not be appropriate for the children involved. Such measures all too often dictate the content and goals of the programs.

4. In attempting to respond to pressures for high scores on widely-used measures of achievement, teachers of young children sometimes feel compelled to use materials, methods, and activities designed for older children. In so doing, they may impede the development of intellectual functions such as curiosity, critical thinking, and creative expression, and, at the same time, promote negative attitudes toward reading.

5. A need exists to provide alternative ways to teach and evaluate progress in pre-reading and reading skills.

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6. Teachers of pre-first graders who are carrying out highly individualized programs without depending upon commercial readers and workbooks need help in articulating for themselves and public what they are doing and why.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Provide reading experiences as an integrated part of the broader communication process that includes listening, speaking, and writing. A language experience approach is an example of such integration.

2. Provide for a broad range of activities both in scope and in content. Include direct experiences that offer opportunities to communicate in different settings with different persons.

3. Foster children's affective and cognitive development by providing materials, experiences, and opportunities to communicate what they know and how they feel.

4. Continually appraise how various aspects of each child's total development affects his/her reading development.

5. Use evaluative procedures that are developmentally appropriate for the children being assessed and that reflect the goals and objectives of the instructional program.

6. Insure feelings of success for all children in order to help them see themselves as persons who can enjoy exploring language and learning to read.

7. Plan flexibly in order to accommodate a variety of learning styles and ways of thinking.

8. Respect the language the child brings to school, and use it as a base for language activities.

9. Plan activities that will cause children to become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

10. Provide opportunities for children to experiment with language and simply to have fun with it.

11. Require that pre-service and in-service teachers of young children be prepared in the teaching of reading in a way that emphasizes reading as an integral part of the language arts as well as the total curriculum.

12. Encourage developmentally appropriate language learning opportunities in the home.

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